

Race, Gender and Leadership: fitting in or challenging assumptions?

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A personal story of leadership in education

Context for leadership and fitting in or challenging assumptions?

A girl in a village in India

Migration to steel making industrial part of England

Schooling in multicultural, multi-ethnic, working class neighbourhood (low expectations of pupils)

First person/female in family to go to university (only non white person on course)

Achieving a range of leadership roles in Further and Higher Education

Some images for reflection

Ethnicity pay gap

Gender pay gap



Some images for reflection

Ethnicity pay gap



Gender pay gap

Statistics from national audits

Race Disparity Audit 2017

- Widely varying outcomes in education, employment, health and criminal justice between Britain's white and ethnic minority populations
- Asian, black and other ethnic groups disproportionately likely to be on a low income
- Just 1% of non-white police officers in senior roles
- In NHS England, 8% of white job applicants shortlisted got the job, compared with 11% of ethnic minorities

Disparities in pay

- Black and minority ethnic (BME) consultants on average earned 4.9% less than white colleagues in basic pay - roughly £4,600 a year (Appleby 2018)
- Black female doctors earn £801 a month less than their white counterparts, while Asian female doctors earn £344 a month less than white female doctors (NHS Digital 2018)
- In academic year 2015-2016, mean gender pay gap was 17.8% and median gender pay gap was 13.7 % in UK HEIs (Equality Challenge Unit 2018)
- Mean average pay gap across UK sector stands at 15.9% with 30 institutions reporting gaps in excess of 20% (THES 2018)

Disparities in representation

- 94% of Vice-Chancellors of the UK's top 50 universities are white, with just 6% from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds
- The Russell Group have an ethnocultural representation that is 97.6% white amongst the senior leadership, making it less diverse than boards of FTSE 100 companies (Green Park 2017)
- In FE, 22% of 16 to 18-year-olds and 29% of adults are from ethnic minority backgrounds. This figure rises sharply in large cities; e.g. in London, 44% of FE college students are BAME
- 7% of FE college principals are BAME. For deputy and vice principals the figure is also 7%, but at the next level – assistant principal and heads of major functions – the figure is only 4%(Forbes 2016)

Thoughts and experiences of BME leaders:

You're never quite accepted...

‘Although I’m now a professor so at the highest levels of the academy, I still feel like an outsider. The dominance of whiteness prevails and you never quite feel at home or able to ‘play the game’ as well as the white guys...’

‘I was recently at an international conference and was shocked when I walked into a workshop to find a group of academics and researchers laughing and joking about ‘chinks’. When they saw me walk in (the only Black person in the room) they looked at me and became very embarrassed...’

‘The funders all seem to want me to research Muslim girls, just because I’m female and Muslim I am being pigeon-holed...’

Thoughts and experiences of BME leaders:

You're never quite accepted...

‘Yet there is a double-take as you enter a room, as if you are not supposed to be there. You are noticed and it is uncomfortable. Like walking into a pub in a town where you don't live. There is confusion, as you are not the natural expected occupant of that role. I know this well; in many meetings, even though I am a professor, I have been mistaken for the coffee lady. Even now, students do a double-take when they realise I am the expert professor taking the class. ...’

Thoughts and experiences of BME leaders:

Challenging practice and assumptions ...

‘Interview and promotion panels tend to be all white ...And I’m not going to shy away from saying it, at these panels – within the processes – there are covert, sometimes overt, nuances of racism. Much of my research suggests that black minority-ethnic academics feel the goal posts are often moved when they apply for jobs or promotions. Fundamentally, if your face doesn’t fit, you won’t get the job’.

‘I think that universities – particularly elite universities – are not really interested in this issue because they want to perpetuate their own image of white privilege and whiteness.’ (Bhopal, 2017)

Thoughts and experiences of BME leaders:

Challenging practice and assumptions ...

‘It’s not recognised that as black academics, and as black female academics, we have to work harder.

When you present students with different ideas that don’t sync with their view of the world, it’s going to be less comfortable for you because you’re challenging the very thing which has become their norms.

There is a surface willingness from the institutions to rebalance racial inequality, but ultimately it is non-white professors who have to face the consequences of diversifying the curriculum’.

Discussion Questions

- As leaders in educational settings how do we respond to these statistics, experiences and reflections?
- How do race, ethnicity and gender influence our own practice?
- What stance should we adopt in working towards race and gender equality in leadership positions - fitting in or challenging assumptions?

References

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THES (2018) Gender pay gap: how much less are women paid at your university? [THES](#)

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